

The P A T H-Way

T O

1698

PERFECTION:

Shewing the Duty of

Children to their Parents;

the promised Blessings, which attend
those that truly perform it.

The Vanity of Worldly Pleasures, in respect of
temptations, with proper Methods to refrain their
incentives; and suitable Remedies against them.

The great necessity of Repentance, with awake-
ning Motives and Exhortations thereunto: As also the
great Danger, and miserable Consequences which
attend the delay and neglect thereof; the comfort-
able Enjoyments which accompany that great and
necessary work, with directions and Encouragements
thereunto.

By J. S. D.D.

*not thy self of to morrow, for thou knowest not what
Day may bring forth, Prov. 27. 1.*

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Courteous Reader,
If these Christian Arguments should not be
reckoned worth laying out one Penny,
be pleased to read it *Gratis*, keep it clean,
and return it in an hour.

I Shall first begin with the Duties of Children to Parents considering the many inconveniencies which generally attend the neglect thereof, for 'tis in vain to undertake a work of repentance without the performance of this Duty it being Expressly Comanded by God himself.

I.

EX OD. XX. XII.

Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may long in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

BUT how little this Duty is regarded is too manifestly known in all parts of this Nation, for Parents have for the most part, their Children no longer under their Obedience, than they are under the Rod, for being grown up they think themselves free from all manner Command, and tho' (perhaps) some do observe it, yet the case be thoroughly Examined 'tis for their own Intake, by gaping for what they have, but very few purely upon the Duty of Conscience. This unnatural Sin of Disobedience to Parents, was by the Law of Moses Punishable with Death, *Deut. 21. 19.* but if Fathers Mothers now a days should be so severe with their Children; Oh what great numbers would make themselves Childless thereby. Hear what the wise Man advises *Prov. the 23. 22.* *Hearken to thy Father that begot and despise not thy Mother when she is old.* But the Youth of our Age are so far from hearkening to their Parents Counsel, that they esteem it as Wisdom to despise it and proceed so far as to mock and deride their Person

in their Extream Age, when Infirmities has both rendred them useless and helpless, but let such vile wretches read *rev. 30. 17. The Eye that mocketh his Father and despiseth to Obey his Mother, the Ravens of the Valley shall pick out, and the Young Eagles shall eat it*; There is ordinarily such a Pride and headiness in Youth, that they cannot abide to submit to the Councils and wholesome Instructions of their Parents; many times accounting them the Effect of Dotage when indeed they are the fruits of Sobriety and experience, design'd for the good and welfare of their souls and Bodies.

The Debt that a Child owes to his Parents is so great that he can never hope to discharge, unless he calls God to his assistance, in begging of him that he would be pleased to reward him for the many troubles and sorrows that they have undergone for him, by multiplying his blessings upon them; but instead of this some are so unnaturally Wicked, as to blaspheme (as I may say) Hell it self for Curses by pouring out black and dismal Expressions against them? which is nothing so horrid, odious and abominable that one would think there needed no perswasion against it. But we see plainly, God himself, (who best knows Men's hearts) that it is possible: otherwise he had not pronounced such a heavy Sentence upon it, *Exod. 21. 17. He that Curseth his Father or Mother let him Die the Death*. And our own experience tells us that many Children there are, who through greediness of the Possessions of their Parents have hastened their Deaths, but let such know that how secretly and fairly soever they carry it before Men, there is one who sees and knows the secret wishes and desires of their hearts. And further take Notice that they who watch long for the Death of their Parents, may by the decree of God, (before they are aware) untimely meet it of their own, for as the Fifth Commandment promiseth Long Life as the reward of honouring the Parents, so by Consequence short life is threatned, upon breach

breach of that Duty, to prove which I could repeat several remarkable Instances in order thereunto.

And again we are to render them all due obedience *Ephes. 6. 1. Children obey your Parents in the Lord for 'tis right*; again *Colos. 3. 20. Children Obey your Parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord.*

You see here *St. Paul* assures us 'tis not only right to obey our Parents in point of natural subjection to them, but there is a higher degree of perfection annexed to it (*viz.*) it is well pleasing to the Lord, so that you see it is so necessary a Duty that Consequently without it cannot please God.

And Lastly we cannot Honour our Parents as we ought unless we assist them in their wants, of what kind soever, whether in weakness of Body, Poverty, or whatsoever earthly unhappiness befalls them, for Christ himself teaches us, that this is Contain'd within the Precept of Honouring our Parents, as you may read *Mark. 7. 10, 11, 13.* How then shall those answer it who deny relief to their poor Parents, and cannot find in their hearts to part with that which they vainly throw away (upon their Pride and Excess,) to satisfy the pressing necessities of those to whom they owe their very being. Nay some; yet worse, who out of great Pride scorn to own their Parents in their Poverty, when themselves are advanced in Wealth, they hold it a disparagement to look on their poor Parents: so that the Childs prosperity (many times) proves the Father and Mothers unhappiness; but this is so unnatural and inhuman ingratitude, as will surely find a just Vengeance from God, unless timely repented of; therefore for the Lord sake, and as you tender the welfare of your Precious Souls, not only read, but put in practice this great and necessary (tho' much decayed and neglected) Duty, in performing which you will, not only merit the Gracious promised reward of Long life and prosperity in this world, but 'twill be a means to obtain (through

merits of Christ, our redeemer,) a happy Crown of glory in the Kingdom of bliss Eternally which God of infinite Mercy grant to us all. *Amen.*

And so I descend to speak something relating to the uncertainty, vanity and deceit, as well as mutability of Earthly seited Pleasures, which are the only Obstructions of Repentance.

II.

he Vanity and Uncertainty of Earthly Pleasures.

Eccl. I. VIII. The Eye is not satisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear fill'd with Hearing.

I this latter Age, the Pleasures of this World are the Idols of Mankind, for 'tis impossible to Love our selves I not to Love our Pleasures, the World has truly nothing in it which may be accounted great, or at least satisfactory, for it's entertainments are strangely Empty and emptying.

For how taking soever a Pleasure may appear or seem in itself, yet 'tis Evidently known that Men soon disrelish what they most Covet to Injoy, nay sometimes they disdain what they Possess.

What is Greatness? 'tis but a slippery height, it is a glorious Slavery, and a fantastick formality. What is Wealth? 'tis not to be reckoned an Enjoyment, but the way to one. What is Lust? but a suddain violent and unruly stirring of Spirits, a suddain Blaze, that flashes and then expires. What is Gaity of Attire? but an Imaginary Pretence to please Children and Fools.

Besides 'tis the Silliness of the Fancy only, which creates a supposed Pleasure, Coveting that most which we never tryed, like a Man who comes into a new World, the strangeness of it only begets the wonder, success many times

times makes a Man loath what before he vehemently Loved, for when he hath try'd all objects he will find them Vanity, for as soon as Experience has Defeated the Person of Imagination, it robs him of the Pleasure. For a Sinner derives his temptation from Custom, and not so much because 'tis pleasant, but because he is used to do so. This is the case of those who pretend to the greatest Gallantry, and Wit in the choice and contrivance of their Sins. Therefore what shall we think of those who basely stoop to the mean and sensual Conceited pleasures of Love, Lust, Gluttony, Pride, Covetousness, For though great Fortunes are necessary to support great Sins, yet our Sins ruin our Fortunes. Our health is necessary to our Sensual Pleasure, but yet our Pleasures dertermine our health: And thus the change of thoughts and humours, makes a Sinners life a strange mixture of desire and disappointment.

Good God? that ever rational Men should for Heaven for such a mixt uncertain State of Empty pleasures as this? Oh that we could but open our Eyes and see through all that Paint and Varnish that mocks and ludes the fancy, we need but be wise and we shall be happy too; for if we once truly understand the world, we cannot but dispise it.

Vain Pleasures are Conceited Sun shines in the purbnt black and dismal cloudes in the Enjoyment, And their Pleasure as is a Beautiful Harlot, sitting in a Chair whose four wheles are Pride, Gluttony, Lust and Idleness the two Horses are Prosperity and Plenty, the two drivers are Covetousness and Ambition, her attendants and followers are horrore Guilt and late repentance (if a Death and ruin; therefore for the Lords sake avoid Strumpit, and come not near the Door of her House. *Ez. 2: I said of Laughter it is Mad and of Mirth, it doth thou?*

And as for Lawful pleasures (as you call them) 'tis
 ir best wisdom only to touch them, and if you will
 them, let it be as Poyson in an Antidote, to fortify
 ir selves against Casual Extremities.

St. *Augustine* before his Conversion, could not Live
 hout the Carnal pleasures of this World, but when
 Nature was chang'd, and his heart fix't upon God,
 how sweet (quoth he) is it to be without that which
 fore Idolized and admired.

What a silly thing therefore is Impiety, and how wise
 well contrived a thing is Religion, for what can we
 remore of God ; if he gives us a pleasant Fortune, he
 scribes us rules how to Enjoy it prudently ; if he
 olves us in a cross one, he supplies us with Comforts to
 eten and support it.

Therefore assure your selves that no pleasure on this
 the Grave, is so truly delighting, so satisfying
 engaging and so lasting as those which spring
 in Union and Communion, from God and Christ, ha-
 a Conscience void of offence towards God and to-
 rds Man.

And further take notice, that no Man yet, (tho' never
 Notorious.) ever sinn'd with a design or perswasion to
 Eternally Damn'd for it. No, no, but thought they
 l provided a reserve safe enough for after Repentance,
 ' God knows, most have miserably miscarryed therein,
 God's cutting them off suddainly, or Sin at last grew
 rong, and they too weak to withstand it. *Jonah. 2.*
They that waite upon Vanities forsake their own mercy.

For it is much easier to Conquer a Lust than to satisfie
 the Ambitious may grow Content sooner than great ;
 Covetous may sooner moderate their desires than sa-
 ie them ; the Adulterer may sooner gain a chaste Spirit,
 n satisfy the ravings of a beastly and wandring Lust.
 : a Man's Frame grows more tractable and governable,
 wholesome Reasonings, and sound advice ; and Heaven-
 ly

ly by Prayers and Meditations. But if you once give way nay but so much as listen to a wanton Suggestion, it will immediatly kindle into Lust and that Lust if Encouraged will flame into inordinate Passion; and Consequentl Passion will grow savage and unruly; And then if fed and pamper'd very rarely (if ever) ceases till it centure in the ruin of thy Body and Estate; and without Extraordinary Mercies, thy precious and Immortal Soul also.

III.

Luke XIII. V. *Itell you nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*

THE occasion of these Words was because the Jews seem'd so rashly and uncharitably to Censure upon the Galileans, whose hard fate was such, as to be Murtherd by Pilate's Cruelty, and at the very time to when they were offering Sacrifices, thereby Conclud'd because their Sufferings Exceeded others, their Sins must consequently be proportionable thereunto. And the 18 also upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, were Judg'd by those Carnal Jews to be greater, most notorious and Capital Sinners, than all others that dwelt at Jerusalem; and from hence vainly flattered themselves, because the like Judgments did not fall upon them they fancied that they were not only safe, but very firm and sure in the favour of God. Therefore our Saviour in order to Correct and Convince them of this their false, rash and hasty Censure, Answers them thus, *Nay but Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* As if he should have said, do you think because you have hitherto Escaped the Judgments, that you shall steal away in the Dark, flee from God's just displeasure. No, no you are very much mistaken, for I say unto you, even you, who are ready to Condemn others and Justifie your Selves,

cept you very speedily fall to an earnest agreement and reconciliation with God, by leaving of your Sins, you shall not only be subject to the like disasters in this life, it shall also perish Eternally, in the world to come, so that our blessed Saviour in this very answer, both (as it were) thunder down a most dreadful Sentence, upon the heads of those vain and high Conceited Christians, who set such a great value upon their own Merits, and such Contemptable and undervaluing thoughts of their poor suffering Brethren; when at the same time (perhaps) they are guilty of as great, if not far greater Sins, than those whom God is pleased to make Examples of his Divine Judgments, and so consequently unless they repent must likewise miserably perish, therefore oh Christians! let us strive to attain to this one thing needful, for it necessary follows, that repentance must go before forgiveness, for unless it leads the way, the gates of God's Mercies will be shut against us. And by this way take notice that repentance is not a careless, but a careful thing, therefore let none think that a few Sighs and saying Lord have mercy upon them now and then, from time to time make fresh Engagements with their evil and odious Impieties, I say let none think this to be repentance. No, no these are direct and downright Contradictions and cannot stand together, to repent for Sin, and to delight in Sin; to hate Sin, and at the same time to Love and entertain it; to fly from Sin, and to follow Sin; is the way to aggravate and Encrease it. For some Men make Religion, only a Sundays Religion, putting it on and off like their Sundays cloaths, and then conclude God is only served for all the week, vainly supposing that if they keep up Religious duties on Sundays, they may do as they please at other times, and think that on the Sabbath they can make even with God again. Like the woman in the *Proverbs*, that having made her Offering, presently ready to Commit fresh Wickedness. *Prov.* 4. as if she had paid off the old score and might now boldly

boldly run on again upon a new. But oh my Brethren God will not Look Mercifully upon any that look pleasantly upon his Sins, the Jealous God will not endure to see thee hankering and longing after Harlots lips, that is by Embracing any Sin with delight. Oh! therefore look into thine hands, look into thine heart, look into thy house, look into thy Shop, thy Trade, thy calling, see that thy heart and mind be not Corrupted, by being fix'd too nigh to something that For true peace with God, cannot be made till those It are removed; therefore be not almost but altogether Christians, perhaps, some of you have been half of mind to repent throughly of your great heinous and cruel Crimes and have wish'd many times, that necessary work had been perform'd. But how long will you tarry barely in these fruitless purposes? When will you come to a full fix'd and firm resolve, don't you plainly see Satan gulls you by tempting you to delays, what if he should cut you off before you come to a happy resolution. Oh how terrible would it be to look back upon the ungracious opportunities of mercies, which you have fully and presumptuously neglected; therefore O Christians I beseech you all in general, Consider what great and weighty necessity there is of Repentance

It was a notable passage of a Noble Roman, who was Loading a Vessel with Corn, to carry to a City time of Famine, the Marriners being unwilling to Sail in a Storm, (says he) *Our Voyage is of more necessity than our Lives.* Therefore as food is Necessary to support natural strength, so is repentance only Necessary to secure the Soul, and preserve it in safety, for the Disease thereof breeding distempers, as well as imbalances therein. For what a Continual tempest and motion is there in a discontented mind? What is sinning evil is inordinate care? What is Passion but a fever in the mind? What is Lust but a fire in the blood? What is Pride but a deadly Tympany? or Covet

an unsatiabie desire? or Malice and Envy, but ven in the very heart? Spiritual Sloath is but a Scurvy the mind, and Carnal security a mortal Lethergy; and v can that Soul, have any true Comfort, that Labours ler so many distempers? Therefore the Conscience not be truly pacified, till soundly cleansed and purified. Peace with sin, and Peace in sin, is more to be aded, then all the troubles in the World.

Wise then, O Sluggard and shake off thine Excuses, w long wilt thou slumber, and fold thy hands to sleep? ou be human Creatures, and not senseless Stocks, stand and consider where you are going, and do not fall Hell with your Eyes open, but bethink your selves, set to this Necessary work of repentance, what, a, and run into the Pit when the very Beasts will not orced in? What endowed with Reason, and yet dally Death and Hell, and the Vengeance of the Almighty. Oh! shew your selves like Men and let reason pre- with you, *Esay. 1. 2. Hear O Heavens, and give Ear th, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and up Children and they have Rebelled against me.*

Here is never a Creature but if it had reason to know tis abused, it would groan against sinful mankind. Land would groan to bear them, the Air would n to give them breath, their Houses to lodge them, heir Beds would refuse to ease them, as would their to nourish them, and their Cloaths to cover them. And ey could but speak, their Food would say Lord; must i such a wretch as this, and yield forth my strength urish him to dishonour thee withal? No, I will choak ather, if thou wilt but give me Commission. The Air would say Lord must I give this Man breath, to e Tongue against Heaven; scorn thy People, and vent ride, Wrath and filthy Communication, and belch aths and Blasphemy against thee, No, if thou ut say the word he shall be breathless for me. His would say Lord must I carry this sinful wretch, upon his

his wicked and Odious designs, No, I will break his bone
I will end his Days, if I may have but leave from thee, a
creatures being (as it were) up in arms against thee till
thy peace is made with God, *Job. 22, 23, 24.*

At distraction and famine thou shalt Laugh, neither shalt thou be afraid of the Beasts of the Earth, for thou shalt be a League with the stones of the field, and the Beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee, And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in Peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation and shalt not Sin.

Oh Sinners make your peace therefore, with the God of peace, and give up your Souls and Lives, to be ruled by him? But that this Exhortation may take the better Effect I will back it with some pressing Considerations.

First either, you must taste of God's goodness or his fury; for there is not a Man nor Woman in the World but must partake of the one or the other, your portion will be either joy or sorrow, either disolation or consolation, if you be not Trees for bearing, you must be Trees for burning, if you are not for fruit, you must be for flames, if you do not swim in the water-works of repentance, you must and shall burn in the fire works of vengeance, if you will not make your peace with God to obtain Heaven, you must go to Hell for not making your peace; for one of them you must do; for as our Saviour saith *Mark. 16. 16. He that believes and is Baptiz'd shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be Damn'd.*

Oh Christians if godliness be evil why do you so much profess it? If it be good why do you so little practise it, either take Christ into your Lives, or cast him out of your Lips, either get oyl into your Lamps or cast them away.

It would be Just with God to fall out with a carnal Man in the Course of his providence, who falls off from him in the Course of his obedience, for wicked Men make the World their treasure, and God makes the World their torment; when they want Estates they are troubled
for

r them, and when they have Estates they are troubled
 ith them. Murmuring Persons, think every thing too
 uch that is done by them, but think every thing too lit-
 : that is done for them; God is as far from pleasing
 em with his Mercy, as they are from pleasing God with
 eir Duty. 'Tis farther observable, that Carnal Men
 ar no wrath because they feel none, Imagining, because
 ey sin unpunished, there is no punishment for their sins.
 nd because Christ goeth on to spare them, they go on to
 rovoke him; and as he adds to their Lives, so they add
 o their Lusts, because he is very Merciful, they will be
 ery Sinful; because he is very good they will be very
 ad: And lastly because Justice winks, Men think he is
 lind: But alas! Inraged Justice will strick home at last,
 nd aveng the quarrel of abused Mercies; for the long-
 r God forbears, the sharper is the stroke when he comes
 o Judgment: And the longer God is lifting up his hand,
 he heavier will the blow be when it falls. *Rev. 2. 21, 22.*
gave her space to repent of her Fornication but she, repen-
ed not. Behold I will cast her into a Bed, and them that
Commit Adultry with her into great tribulation, except they
repent of their deeds.

Again Consider o man! that so long as you let sin Con-
 nage in you, it is and will be like a Serpent in the bosom
 that is stinging, or like a Thief in the cloister that is steal-
 ing, or like Poyson in the Stomach that is Poysoning, or
 like a sharp two edged Sword in the Bowels that is killing.
 Therefore for the Lords sake leave off your Sins, for think
 of them how you will, some are in Hell already for smal-
 ler Sins (perhaps) than you now daily puts in practise.
 For is it not better here to forgo the pleasures of Sin, then
 hereafter to undergo the pain for Sin. You that sin now
 for your profit, will then find your Sins unprofitable, for
 he that likes the works of Sin, to do them will never like
 the wages of Sin, to have them.

Sin is both Shameful and Damnable, it shameth Me this World and Damneth them in the World to come is like *Judas*, it at first salutes, but at last betrays us, or *Dalila*, smile in our faces, and at the same time betrays us into our mortal Enemies hand. Oh that Men would deal truly with their own Souls; for tho' many tall grace yet few taste of it. Every one that talks like a Christian does not walk like one, many wear Christs very, who do the Devils Drudgery, many have their hands as white as wool, and their hearts as black as ink. Therefore remember that the sheeps coat, will be taken from off the Wolves back. If here be nothing done for your selves on Earth, there will be nothing done for your Souls in Heaven.

And for a further Motive to Repentance suppose, presumptuous Sinner! that thou sawest a Condemn'd Person hanging over a burning fire furnace, by nothing but a small thred, which was ready to break every moment would not thine heart and bowels tremble and yearn for such a one? Why (as *Nathan* said to *David*) thou art Man. This is thy very Case, that readeest this, if thou dost not speedily repent, for what if the thred of thy life should break, (as thou knowest not but it may at every next moment) where wouldest thou be then? whether wouldest thou drop? but into the lake that burneth with fire and Brimstone, where thou must lie weltering Eternally in that fiery Ocean if thou diest in an unconverted state. And canst thou read this and not tremble, do not thy heart throb in thy bosom, doth not thy tears bedew the Paper, dost thou not yet smite upon thy breast and bethink thy self of what need thou hast of a change? O what is thy heart made of. If the dismal cries of *Core*, *Dathan* and *Abiram* were so terrible, (when the Earth opened her Mouth and swallowed them up) that all *Israel* fled at the cry of them, *Numb.* 16. 33. 34. Oh how fearful and amazing would be the Dreadful cry, if thou

ould take (but) off the Covering from the Mouth of
 Hell and let the cry of the Dam'd (in all it's terrors)
 send among the Children of Men, certainly 'twould
 be very piercing. Why as God liveth that made thy Soul,
 unless thou repentest and be converted) thou art but a
 few hours distance from this. Therefore Oh my beloved
 Christians, if you have any pity for your perishing Souls,
 be with the present offers of mercy, and do not stick
 at the birth, if the God that made you have any Autho-
 rity with you obey his Commands, repent, come in and
 be Converted, and let not Heaven stand open for you
 to fall, therefore look to it, for I will say with *Moses*,
Num. 30. 19. That I have set before you, life and Death,
 blessings and Cursings, therefore chuse life, that you may

Therefore with good King *Hezekiah* let us be afraid of
 God's threatnings, and be truly sorry for our Sins, and
 truly and unfeignedly repent, for the same, that when the
 wicked who have wallowed in Lust and Pleasures here
 now, shall be condemn'd and plung'd into their ever-
 lasting pains; we may then I say, receive Crowns of Glo-
 ry, and reign with God and Christ in the fulness of all
 Joy and Comfort, in the highest Heavens world
 without end. To whom with the Father, Son and Holy
 Spirit, be all honour, glory, power and dominion now and
 evermore. *Amen.*

Licensed according to Order.

